

Thumb Pheasant Management Area Master Plan
Michigan Department of Natural Resources



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WILDLIFE DIVISION

DON BONNETTE

FEBRUARY 2017

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Intended Purpose and General Management Direction

The intended purpose and general management direction for the Thumb Pheasant Management Areas (hereafter PMA) was set forth by the Natural Resources Commission in 1971: acquire reasonably good farmland throughout traditional pheasant range in the thumb counties and manage habitat to produce huntable pheasant numbers on these lands. This still remains the guiding principal of management on these areas today and into the foreseeable future. The Thumb PMA's included in this masterplan are located in Huron, Tuscola and Sanilac Counties and are comprised of the following State Game Areas: Brookfield #1, Brookfield #2, and Oliver Township in Huron County; Almer Township, Columbia Township, Denmark Township and Elmwood Township in Tuscola County and Flynn Township in Sanilac County. See Appendix 1 for current maps for each area.

The Natural Resources Commission approved the land acquisitions that eventually became the Thumb PMA's in November of 1971 utilizing Public Recreation Bond funds and an appropriation from the State Legislature for hunting land acquisition specifically for pheasant habitat. This was in response to landscape scale habitat loss due to changes in farming practices that lead to a steep decline in pheasant numbers and hunting opportunity in the 1960's. Farming practices in the Thumb counties continue to emphasize traditional row crop agriculture, fence row-to-fence row fall plowing and haying during the peak of pheasant nesting that further erodes pheasant habitat and numbers, making the habitat provided on the PMA's all the more important for pheasants now and in the future.

The PMA's are within the primary pheasant restoration areas identified in the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative along with other Thumb SGA's. These state lands have been identified specifically in the Initiative as being key to restoring pheasant numbers and habitat throughout the Thumb. Each of these areas has the potential to serve as a hub for additional habitat improvement efforts on adjoining private lands.

Background

At a local level, this plan helps fulfill goals and objectives of other higher level Department and Wildlife Division plans and initiatives. The Department goals (protect natural resources, sustainable recreation, strong natural resource-based economies, and strong relationships and partnerships), the Wildlife Division's Guiding Principles and Strategies (Goal 2-Manage habitat for sustainable wildlife populations, Goal 4-Increase public participation in hunting and trapping), More Bang For Your Buck concepts (outstanding grouse, woodcock and turkey hunting, challenge of small game hunting, and great diversity of high quality waterfowl hunting), the Division's Southeast Regional Operational Plan, Southeast Region Habitat Guidance documents, and the Southeast Region Land Management Plan are all reflected in this master plan.

Wildlife Species

True to the intended purpose of the PMA's , we will continue to focus our efforts on pheasant habitat management to provide quality hunting opportunities and bolster

pheasant numbers on each area and on surrounding private lands. Ring-necked pheasants are the featured species on these areas and habitat management efforts will be directed towards providing secure nesting, brood rearing and wintering habitat on each area. Habitat will be maintained and/or created by a combination of prescribed fire, brush control, grass/forb plantings and winter food plots.

Existing Conditions

Topography on all PMA's is generally level with loam to sandy loam soils well suited to agriculture. The surrounding private lands are primarily agricultural with widely scattered small woodlots on less productive soils. Cover types, and the relative proportion each occupies on a given PMA, varies considerably among areas. Figure 1 provides an aggregate cover type analysis for all PMA's based on preliminary Michigan Forest Inventory (MiFI) data.

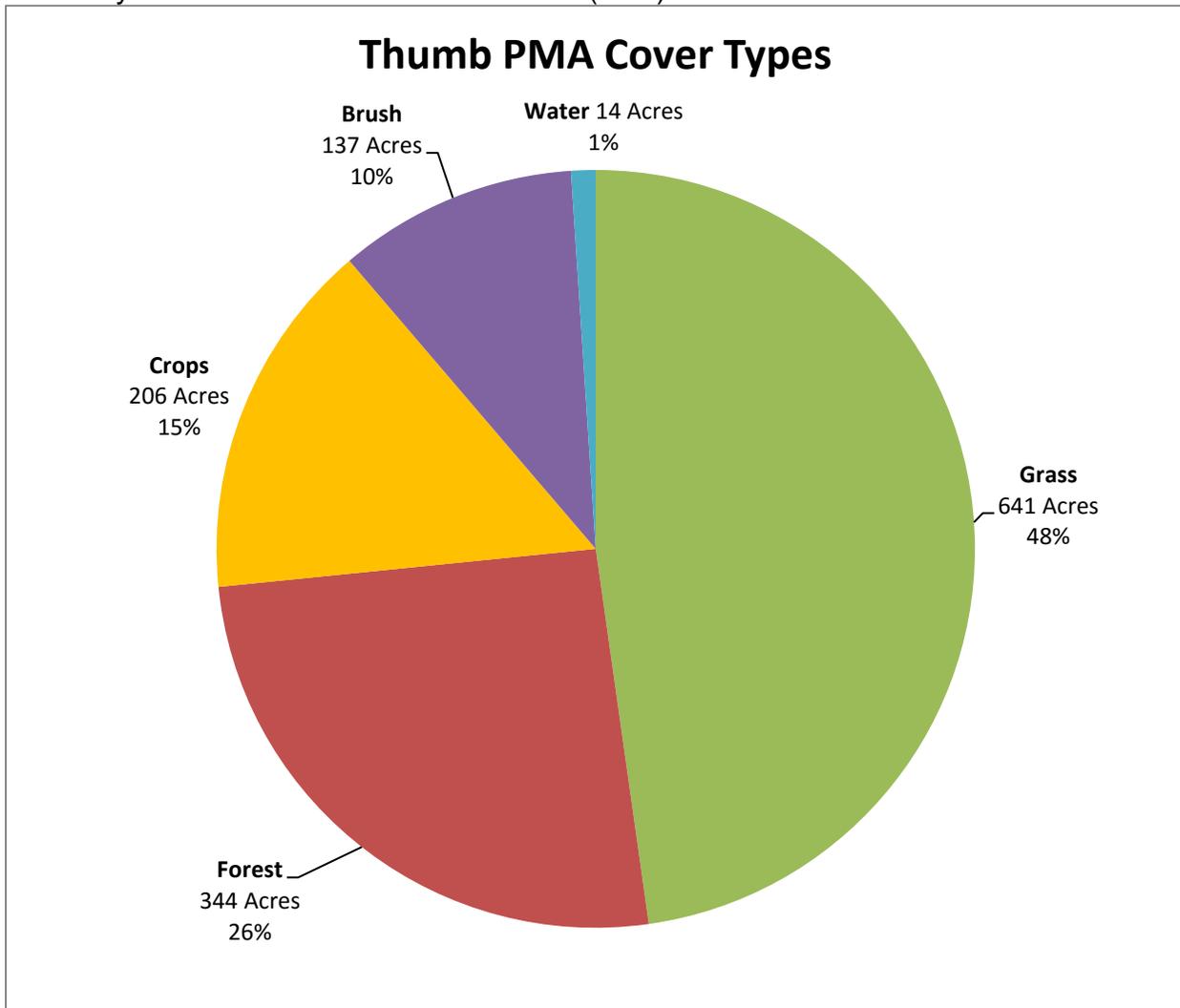


Figure 1: Thumb PMA cover types derived from preliminary MiFI data.

Slightly fewer than three-quarters of PMA acreage is in preferred cover types (grassland, brush, agriculture) and the remainder is in forested cover types. Grasslands are typically

mixes of warm season grasses and forbs with smaller components of cool season grasses and forbs. Agricultural lands are farmed by local farmers on annual sharecropping agreements and generally follow a rotation of corn, beans and wheat. Forested cover types are primarily pole to log sized mixed upland hardwoods and a few patches of sapling to pole size stands resulting from past management practices. Invasive species are not a significant problem currently on the PMA's but the potential does exist, particularly from phragmites and autumn olive. Each of these species has the ability to impact habitat and recreational opportunity should they become widely established.

Recreational Use

Each of the PMA's sees heavy hunting pressure on opening day of pheasant season and firearm deer season. After opening day of these hunting seasons use is very low to non-existent on week days and low to moderate on weekends. Outside the fall hunting seasons use on the PMA's is minimal though a few members of the public take advantage of limited opportunities for turkey hunting, berry picking and bird watching.

Impacts on the Local Economy

Contributions to the local economy resulting from activities on the game area include sharecropping on 206 acres through agreements with local farmers plus an unknown number of hunter use days each year that provide a direct boost to local restaurants, sporting goods stores, convenience stores and gas stations, particularly on opening day of pheasant season and firearm deer season.

Management Direction

The desired future condition for the Thumb PMA's is outlined in the following table.

Table 1: Desired future condition of cover types on the Thumb PMA's.

<i>Cover type</i>	<i>Desired Future Condition</i>
Grass	Increase
Forest	Decrease
Crops	Decrease
Brush	Increase

Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions

What follows is the strategic direction for the Thumb PMA's, to be implemented during this 10 year planning cycle. This plan describes the **goals** or desired future condition for the area, the **objectives** under each goal, and the **actions** associated with each

objective. Goals come mostly from the featured species and habitat issues relevant to the PMA's.

Goal I sustainable populations of pheasants on PMA's

Rationale: pheasants are highly desirable game species and managing for their habitat increases pheasant numbers and benefits other wildlife species; particularly white-tailed deer and cottontail rabbits.

Metrics: staff observation and hunter surveys; assessment of grassland/forb, brush and croplands community condition and extent through time based on inventory data

Objective A. Increase grassland acreage by 5% (65 acres) through new warm season grass plantings and maintain existing grassland acreage.

Action 1. Establish new warm season grass plantings on 65 acres by converting land devoted to crops.

Action 2. Establish a prescribed fire rotation for each PMA that treats 1/3 of grassland acreage annually. In lieu of prescribed fire treat an equal proportion of grassland annually through scarification and inter-seeding with warm season grasses and forbs.

Objective B. Increase brush component by 15% (200 acres) and decrease forested component by 15% (200 acres) on all PMA's combined to provide winter cover.

Action 1. Utilize commercial and/or non-commercial timber harvest on 20 acres annually for the next 10 years to reduce forest cover to produce brushy early succession forest cover.

Action 2. Evaluate existing brush acreage annually and treat with cutting/mowing as necessary to prevent succession to forest types.

Acquisition and Disposal of Land

There is limited opportunity for land acquisition around the PMA's due to high land values and lack of willing sellers. Should lands become available they will be evaluated on a case by case basis to determine suitability for acquisition.

Review and Approval

This plan will be available for public review and comment on the DNR website between March 13, 2017 and April 10, 2017. Changes will be made, as necessary, based on public feedback. Once the plan is approved, it will be placed on the [DNR website](#) and

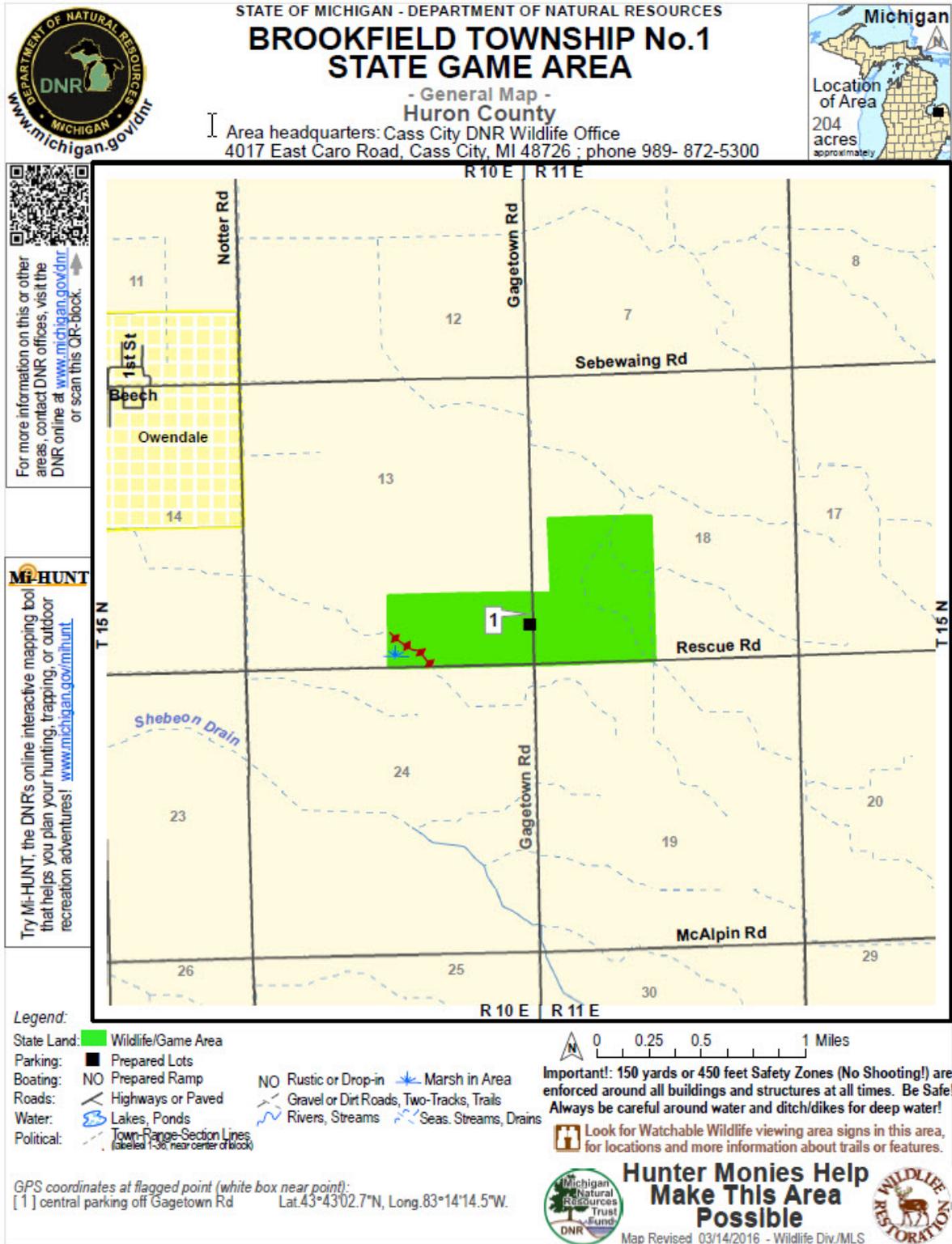
will be reviewed again within 10 years of the approved date. Send comments to Don Bonnette bonnetted@michigan.gov

Approvals

Nathan Levitte, Field Operations Manager

Timothy Payne, Southeast Region Supervisor

Appendix 1: Thumb PMA Maps





STATE OF MICHIGAN - DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

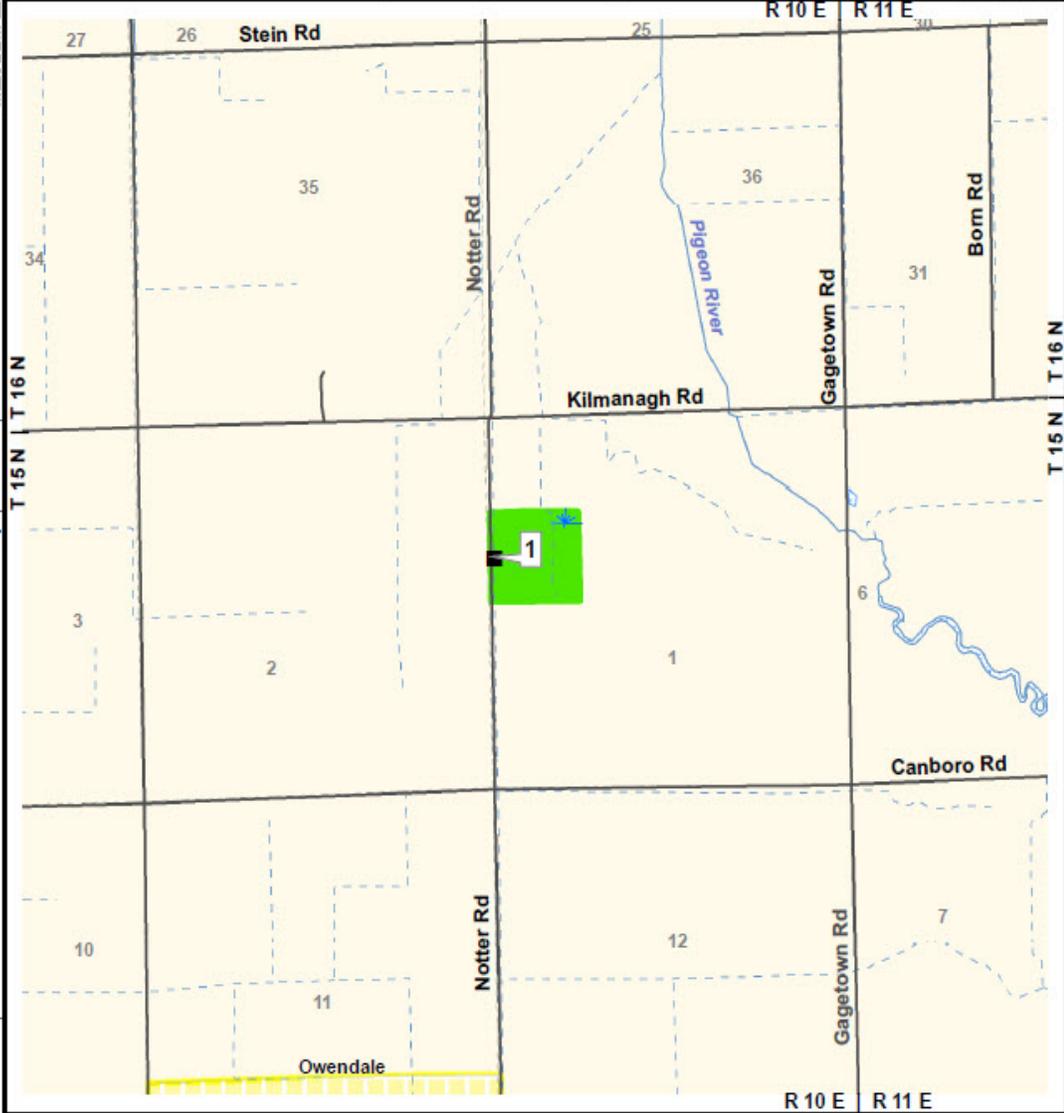
BROOKFIELD TOWNSHIP No.2 STATE GAME AREA

- General Map -
Huron County

Area headquarters: Cass City DNR Wildlife Office
4017 East Caro Road, Cass City, MI 48726 ; phone 989- 872-5300



For more information on this or other areas, contact DNR offices, visit the DNR online at www.michigan.gov/dnr or scan this QR-block.



Mi-HUNT
Try Mi-HUNT, the DNR's online interactive mapping tool that helps you plan your hunting, trapping, or outdoor recreation adventures! www.michigan.gov/mihunt

- Legend:**
- State Land: Wildlife/Game Area
 - Parking: 1 Prepared Lots
 - Boating: Prepared Ramp
 - Roads: Highways or Paved
 - Water: ~ Lakes, Ponds
 - Political: Town-Range-Section Lines (labelled 1-36, near center of block)
 - NO Rustic or Drop-in
 - ~ Gravel or Dirt Roads, Two-Tracks, Trails
 - ~ Rivers, Streams
 - ~ Marsh in Area
 - ~ Seas, Streams, Drains

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Important! 150 yards or 450 feet Safety Zone (No Shooting!) are enforced around all buildings and structures at all times. Be Safe! Always be careful around water and ditch/dikes for deep water!

Look for Watchable Wildlife viewing area signs in this area, for locations and more information about trails or features.

GPS coordinates at flagged point (white box near point):
[1] central parking off Notter Rd Lat.43°45'10.1"N, Long.83°15'26.9"W.

Hunter Monies Help Make This Area Possible



STATE OF MICHIGAN - DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

OLIVER TOWNSHIP STATE GAME AREA

- General Map -
Huron County

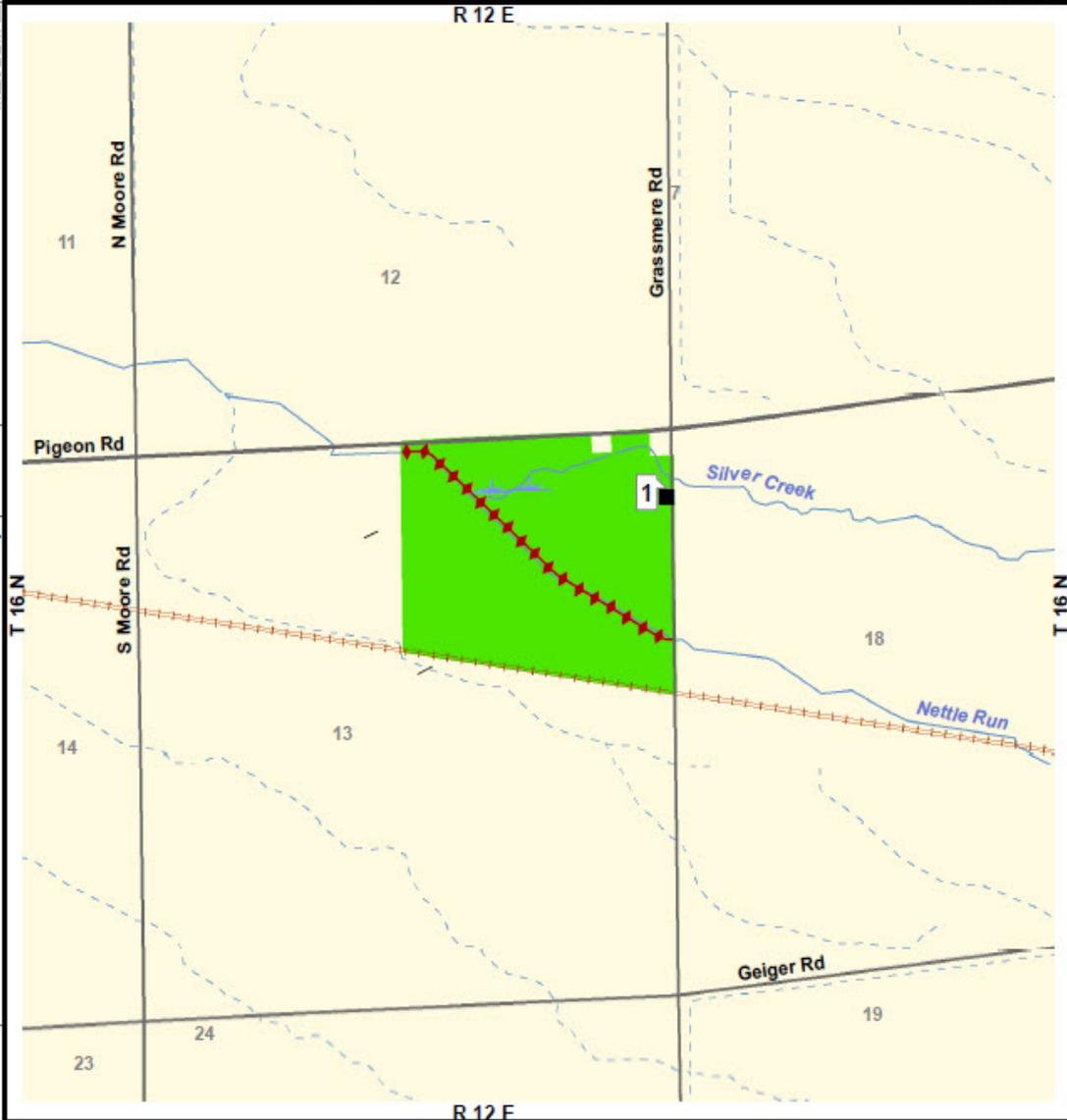
Area headquarters: Cass City DNR Wildlife Office
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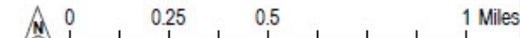


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Legend:

- | | | | |
|-------------|--|--|-----------------------|
| State Land: | Wildlife/Game Area | | |
| Parking: | Prepared Lots | | |
| Boating: | Prepared Ramp | NO Rustic or Drop-in | Marsh in Area |
| Roads: | Highways or Paved | Gravel or Dirt Roads, Two-Tracks, Trails | |
| Water: | Lakes, Ponds | Rivers, Streams | Seas, Streams, Drains |
| Political: | Town-Range-Section Lines (labelled 1-36, near center of block) | | |
| Other: | Railroads | Power Lines, Pipes | Dike / Ditch Areas |



Important!: 150 yards or 450 feet Safety Zones (No Shooting!) are enforced around all buildings and structures at all times. Be Safe! Always be careful around water and ditch/dikes for deep water!

Look for Watchable Wildlife viewing area signs in this area, for locations and more information about trails or features.

GPS coordinates at flagged point (white box near point):
[1] Parking lot (off Grassmere Road) Lat.43°49'06"N, Long.83°07'17"W.



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Map Revised 02/29/2016 Wildlife Div./MI C



STATE OF MICHIGAN - DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

ALMER TOWNSHIP STATE GAME AREA

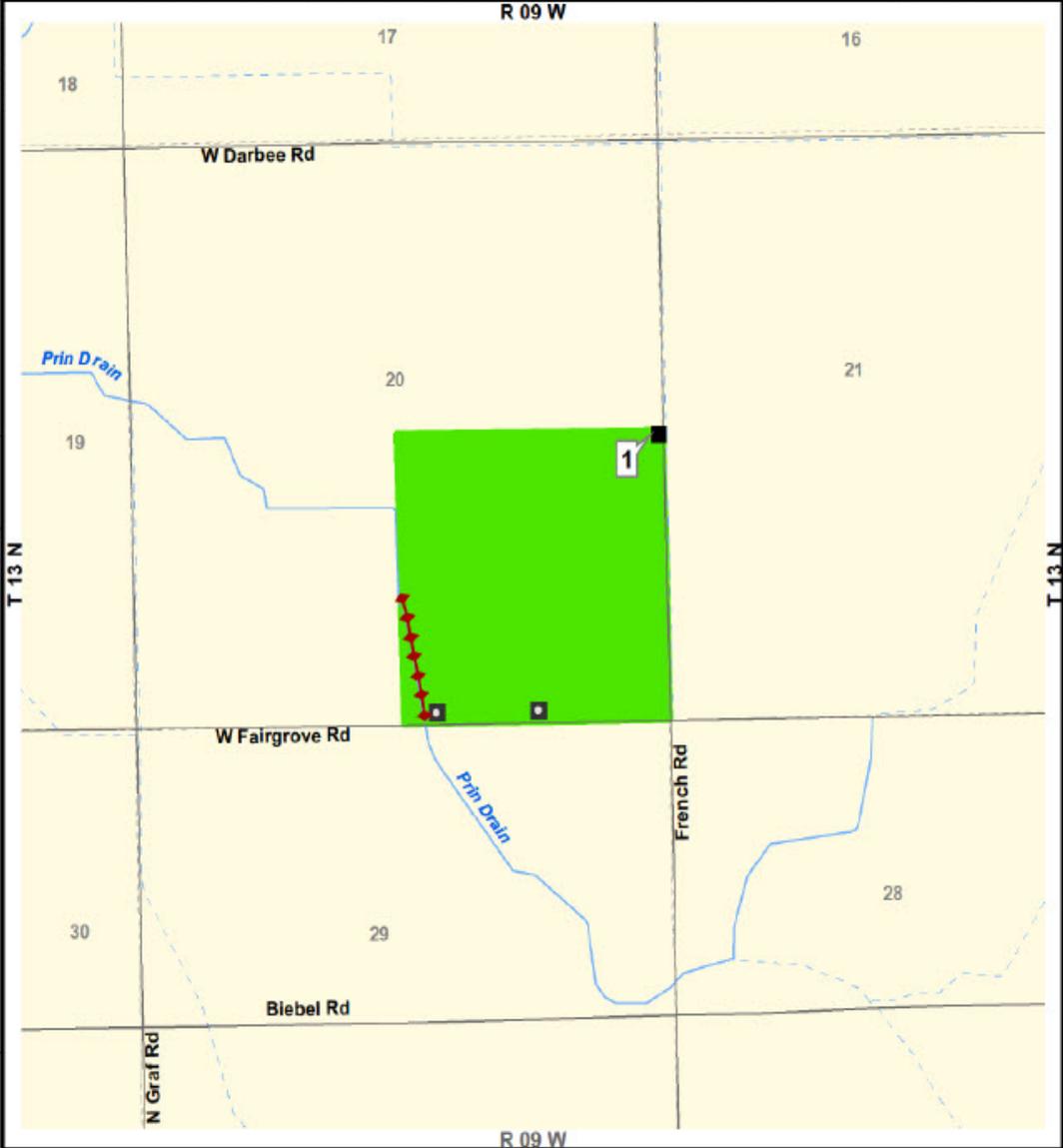
- General Map -
Tuscola County

Area headquarters: Cass City DNR Wildlife Office
4017 East Caro Road, Cass City, MI 48726 : phone 989- 872-5300

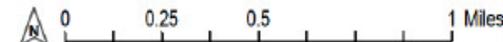


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 - Roads: Highways or Paved
 - Water: ~ Lakes, Ponds
 - Political: Town-Range-Section Lines (labeled 1-36 near center of block)
 - Other: - - - Ditch / Dike Areas
 - Rustic or Shoulder-side Parking
 - NO Rustic or Drop-in
 - Gravel or Dirt Roads, Two-Tracks, Trails
 - ~ Rivers, Streams
 - ~ Seas, Streams, Drains
 - ~ Marsh in Area



Important! 150 yards or 450 feet Safety Zones (No Shooting!) are enforced around all buildings and structures at all times. Be Safe! Always be careful around water and ditch/dikes for deep water!

Look for Watchable Wildlife viewing area signs in this area, for locations and more information about trails or features.

GPS coordinates at flagged point (white box near point):
[1] Parking off the road (northeast corner): Lat. 43°31'52"N, Long 83°25'43"W.

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COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP STATE GAME AREA

- General Map -
Tuscola County

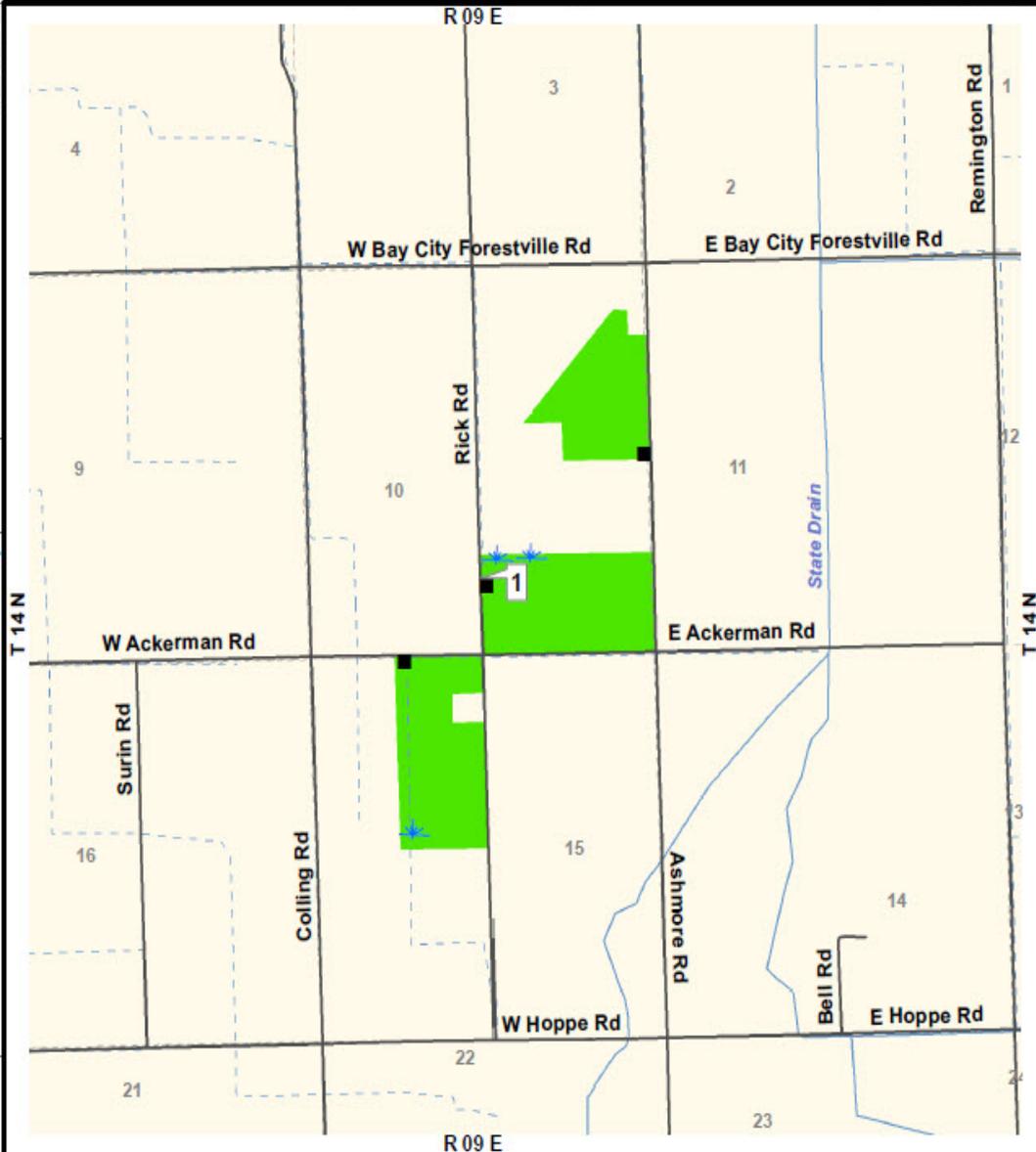
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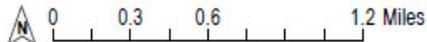


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- Water: ~ Lakes, Ponds
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Look for Watchable Wildlife viewing area signs in this area, for locations and more information about trails or features.

GPS coordinates at flagged point (white box near point):
[1] central parking (middle of 3 units) Lat.43°38'33.5"N, Long.83°24'10.0"W.



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Map Revised 03/15/2016 Wildlife Div./MI C



STATE OF MICHIGAN - DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

DENMARK TOWNSHIP STATE GAME AREA

- General Map -
Tuscola County

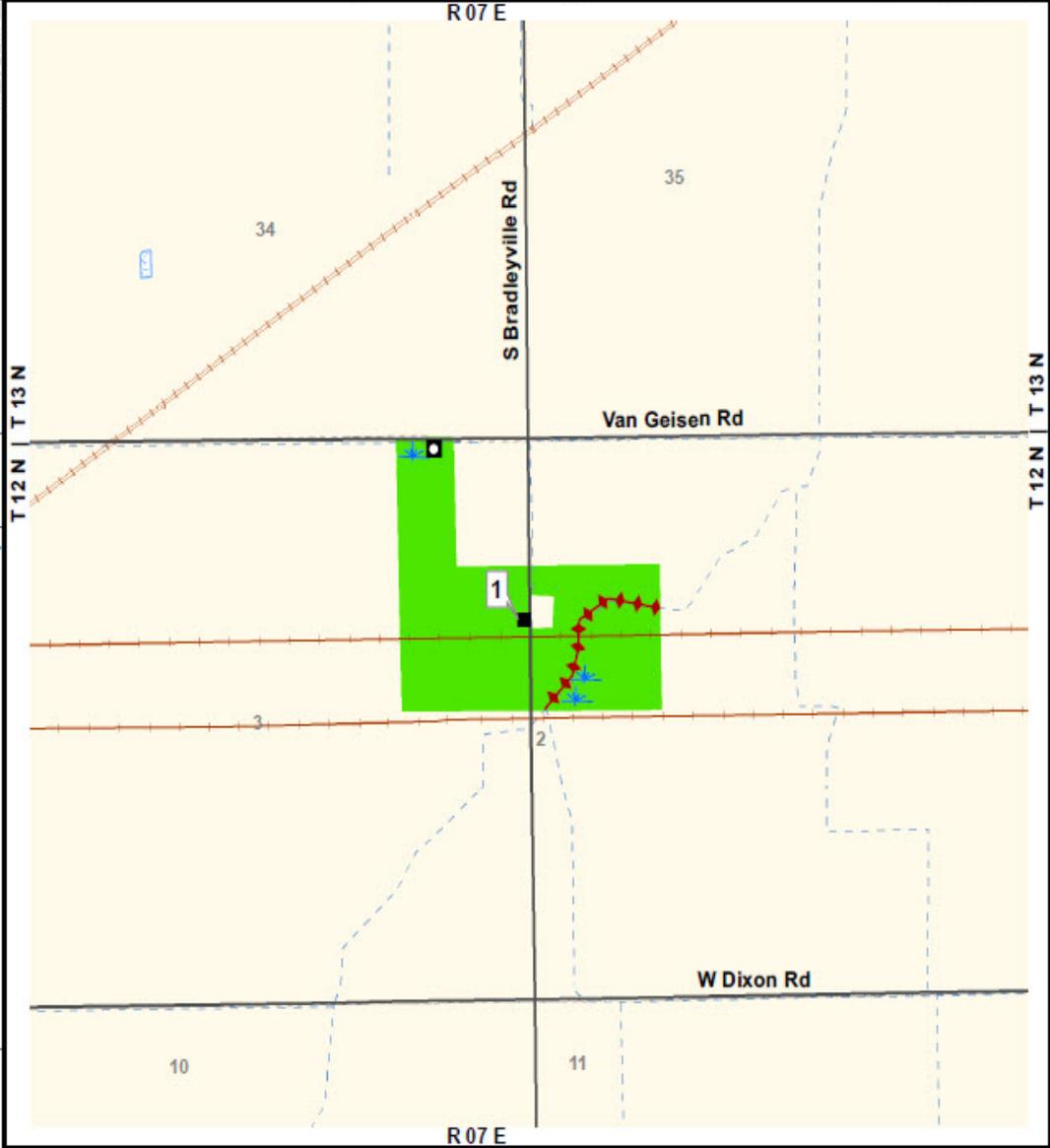
Area headquarters: Cass City DNR Wildlife Office
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Mi-HUNT

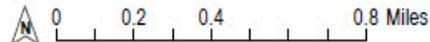
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Legend:

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| Parking: | Prepared Lots | Rustic or Drop-in | Marsh in Area |
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| Political: | Town-Range-Section Lines (letters 1-36, near center of block) | Dike / Ditch Areas | |
| Other: | Railroads | | |

GPS coordinates at flagged point (white box near point):
[1] parking off west side of S. Bradleyville Rd Lat.43°28'30.1"N, Long.83°37'18.8"W.



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Map Revised: 03/15/2016 Wildlife Div./MI C



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ELMWOOD TOWNSHIP STATE GAME AREA

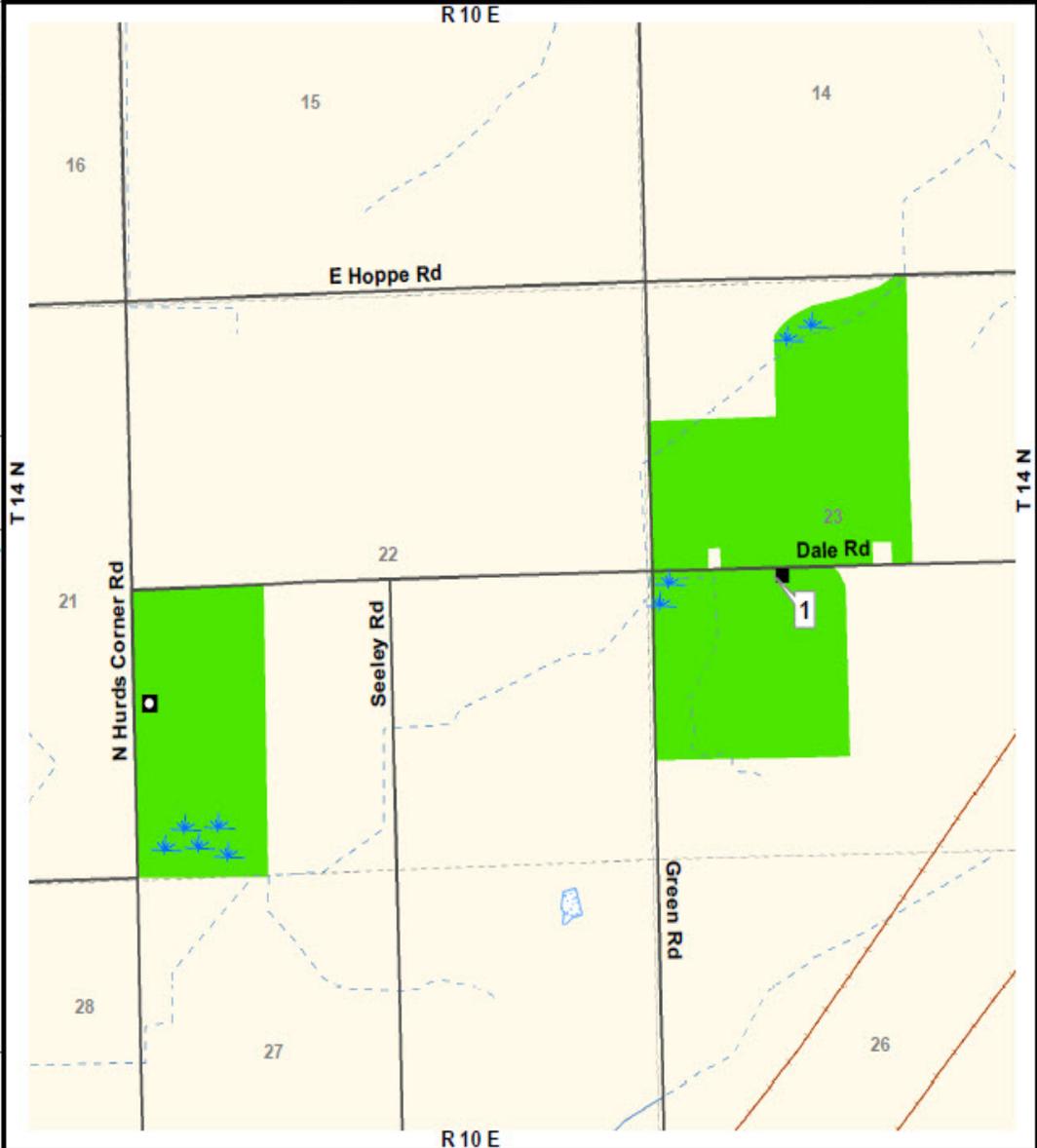
- General Map -
Tuscola County

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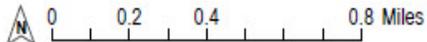
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| | Rivers, Streams |
| | Seas, Streams, Drains |
| | Power Lines, Pipes |

GPS coordinates at flagged points (white box near point):
[1] parking south of Dale Rd in east unit Lat.43°37'13.7"N, Long.83°16'06.7"W.



Important! 150 yards or 450 feet Safety Zones (No Shooting!) are enforced around all buildings and structures at all times. Be Safe! Always be careful around water and ditch/dikes for deep water!

Look for Watchable Wildlife viewing area signs in this area, for locations and more information about trails or features.



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Map Revised: 03/17/2016 Wildlife Div./M.C.



STATE OF MICHIGAN - DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

FLYNN TOWNSHIP STATE GAME AREA

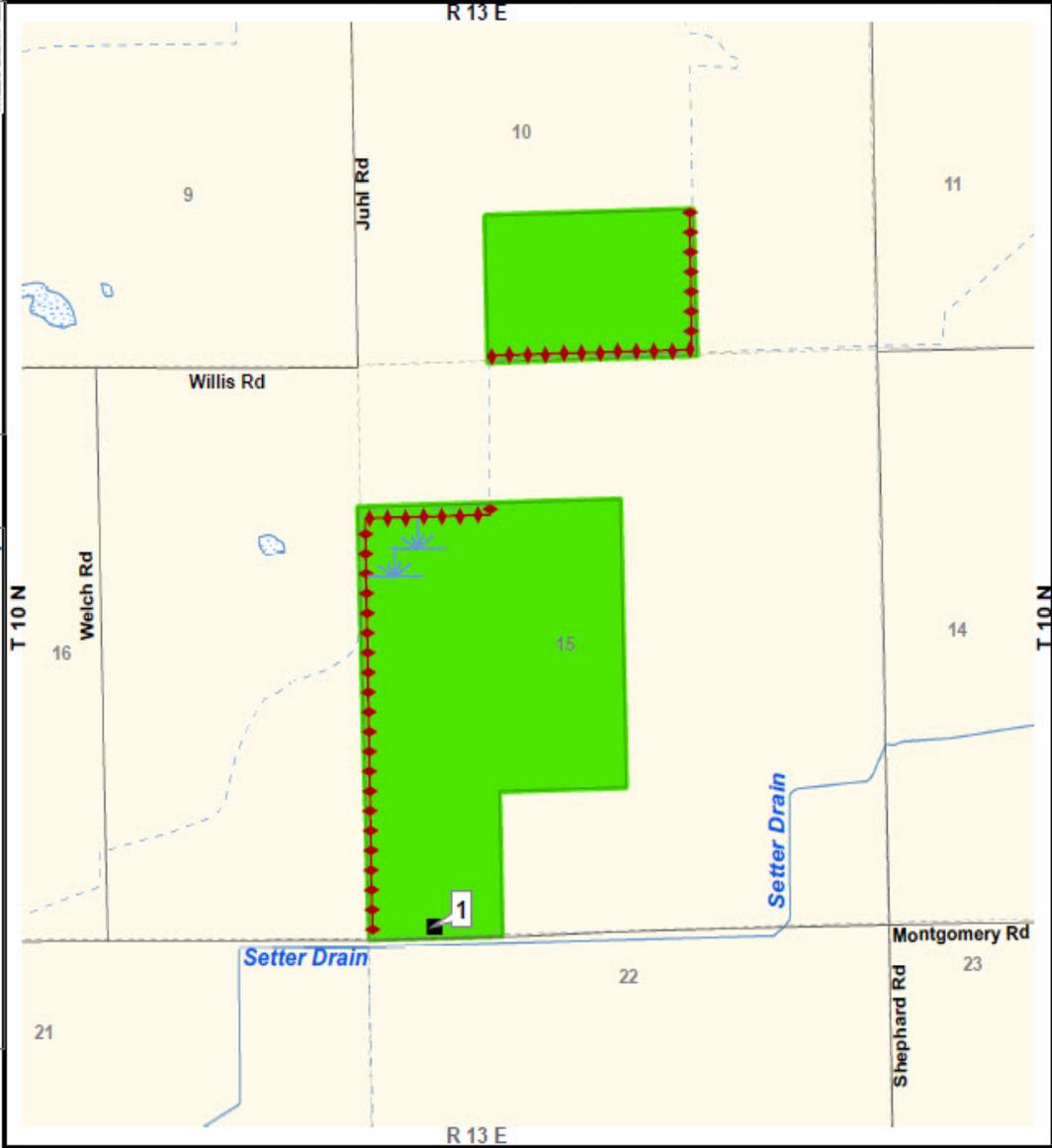
- General Map -
Sanilac County

Area headquarters: Cass City DNR Wildlife Office
4017 East Caro Road, Cass City, MI 48726 ; phone 989- 872-5300



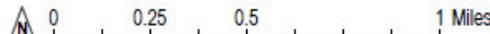
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GPS coordinates at flagged points (white box near point):
[1] Parking lot, south unit (off Montgomery Rd) at 43°17'08"N, Long. 82°56'27"W



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Map Revised: 09/01/2015 Wildlife Div/MI-C